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Wendy Burton
Sharon Clancy
Jim Crowther
Sarah Galloway
Derek Keenan
Sarah McEwan
Joyce Nicholson
John Player

Is Adult Education "Life long
learning" all that as it says on
the tin? For Everyone? All inclusive?

100 years of radical Adult Education in Scotland

building hope for the future

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individualism.
Individualism
pathologises the
individual

importance of literature -
to open worlds -
'the word and
the world'
(Freire)

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100 years of radical Adult Education in Scotland: Building hope for the future

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Sarah Galloway

Introduction

This pamphlet contains the transcripts of talks made on November 16th 2019, at the only event held in Scotland marking the 100th anniversary of the 1919 *Report on Adult Education*. The 1919 report shaped the development of formalised adult education in Britain and continues to influence the current adult learning landscape. We met just a few days before the publication of the 2019 Centenary Report on Adult Education¹, with its call to reinvigorate our national infrastructure for adult learning necessary for securing adult learning so essential to civic and political life.

The event was held at the offices of the Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC) on Woodlands Road in Glasgow. The purpose was to look back to the social and economic crises that shaped Scotland in 1919, immediately after the Great War, considering the role of radical adult education within social movement responses. This was no nostalgia trip. The intention was to be reminded of how adult education was born out of crisis and was integral to collective refusals to accept social injustice and inequality. Our assumption was that this reminder might inspire our own responses to current political and social events.

The talks took place in the weeks before the emergence of Covid-19, which catalysed existing crises following ten years of austerity in Britain. These are crises of poverty, poor public health, low wage economy, environmental degradation, and inequitable access to education and learning.

Sharon Clancy, in her role as Chair of the Raymond Williams Foundation, leads the debate. She sets out a wider British context where adult education infrastructure is in the process of dismantlement, and a political culture where ordinary people are presented as being defective in some way. Here she raises the importance of British adult education traditions informed by Raymond Williams and the idea that culture is ordinary. Ordinary culture and ordinary people like us might inform knowledge creation and practices necessary to addressing the political and economic crises we face. Here Sharon underlines the need for adult education provisions to renew pathways that open up a broad curriculum, beyond narrow programmes or upskilling for limited employment opportunities.

The remaining contributions take the form of 'looking back' at the Scotland of 1919 and then 'looking forward' to the contemporary adult education landscape in formation. Three themes are addressed, all significant in 1919 and remaining so in contemporary Scotland. All the contributions are reflective of distinctive Scottish contexts. However, far from being parochial, we would argue this makes these talks of greater interest and relevance to the wider world.

Firstly, Jim Crowther and Sarah McEwan 'look back' and 'look forward' at literacies education geared towards adults. Perhaps this radical tradition is rooted in the Scottish Reformation and the Scottish Enlightenment, but guided by the principle that literacies might be powerful and empowering for communities and individuals.

Secondly, Derek Keenan and Wendy Burton 'look back' and 'look forward' at working class education central to workers' organisations. Here we can sense the contrast between current times and 1919, when unions were burgeoning and the electoral influence of organised labour was on the ascendancy. Whilst trade unions currently offer a range of significant and inspiring learning initiatives, the recent trajectory of our movement is weaker in terms of numbers, strength, and solidarity.

Thirdly, John Player and Joyce Nicholson consider adult education and the temperance and recovery movements. Whilst outlining a less examined context for adult learning, perhaps these final talks go some way to encapsulating what's distinctive about the Scottish adult education tradition. I would summarise this as a tradition that sources strength in response to despair and springs social compassion from collective indignity.

The event was lively and we engaged in some spirited discussions. The character of the discussion is captured, in a limited way, in the speech bubbles interspersing the text. These contributions were transcribed from comments posted by participants during the event itself. What's revealed is more questions and less in the way of answers. Adult education as a radical response to social injustices is closely tied to our own experiences and stories and there is an important dialogue that needs to be continued. The transcripts might be interpreted in that spirit and we invite you to contact us and continue the conversation.

1. <https://www.centenarycommission.org/wp-content/uploads/reports/The-Centenary-Commission-on-Adult-Education-Report-LOW-RES.pdf>

So, I invite you to read on in the spirit of Joyce's invitation to "embrace those in your community" and "find ways in which we can all act together". Joyce makes a plea for *conscientização*, for pedagogies of hope. What are the opportunities for radical adult education to tackle inequalities and what is your role?

Sharon Clancy

100 years of adult education

I'm here primarily today as Chair of the *Raymond Williams Foundation* and I've been in that role for about three years now. But also, I've been a *Centenary Commission* member for the last year, actually looking at *Adult Education 100* as we've called ourselves: what was the influence of the 1919 report of 100 years ago, what do we need to do for today in taking adult education forwards after the mass destruction of adult education in the UK generally. I'm going to talk a little bit about the foundational thinking in the adult education original 1919 report and also take us a bit further forward in thinking how that reflects on today, in how we can perhaps use that for thinking about the future.

So the 1919 *Adult Education Committee*, chaired by the Master of Balliol College, Oxford, was made up of an amazing group of people: trade unionists, adult educators, and university academics. They felt that adult education at the particular time they were talking, immediately post-World War I, should be about liberal, non-technical adult education. They were very committed to trying to pick apart vocational/non-vocational, and they saw that it was essential to all individuals and all communities, and that adult education "was a permanent national necessity and an inseparable aspect of citizenship, and therefore should be both universal and lifelong". I think that centrally summarises something essential about adult education – that it is there for life, an aspect of citizenship, and is part of a permanent national necessity which as we know has been massively eroded.

The report really brought in a whole swathe of legislation; it enabled local authorities to provide adult education. But I think, critically for me anyway as a voluntary sector activist and community person, they crucially understood the role of the voluntary sector as being as important, if not more important, than the local authority in providing education. They saw the resurgence, if you like, or the growth, of the *Workers' Educational Association* at the time, the co-operative movement, and they were committed to education for transformation at community level. They were much more interested actually in communities than individuals, very interesting compared with our focus now perhaps much more on the individual. And they were particularly keen on the idea of how they could enable working class people who had little access to education to engage in education for life.

And I think there are some fascinating parallels with 2019 and 1919 – this world of risk that we live in at the moment, and the world of risk that we saw in 1919: The Great War had just ended, the whole swathe of strikes, including rental strikes, etc., which was described as the 'war after the war'. The extension of the franchise to some women but to all men immediately post-war, and that kind of international ideological influence on the rise of socialism at the time, the Labour movement and the break with the established two-party system, with the growth of the Labour Party. So this surging growth in adult education infrastructure really reflects something about that ideological change and shift, and the tensions – some of the interesting ideological tensions – between the state and the non-state.

Now of course we have Brexit, the challenges to political legitimacy. Our contentions around the EU and 'democracy in crisis' is how I would describe it. Ineffectiveness in governance, whereby a lot of people feel that globalisation has affected our ability to govern ourselves as a nation-state. The break-up of the established two-party system, and then of course the erosion of the Left, which is a terrible tragedy; the rise of nationalism, the rise of right-wing populism which we see everywhere. And most crucially I think for today, the destruction of adult and further education, and I'll say a bit more about that, especially for working class communities.

So I see us as in a real contemporary crisis and I think adult education is absolutely crucial to trying to navigate our way through some of these critical contemporary challenges. We've got a huge crisis of inequality – social, economic, political inequality – in the UK, huge income disparity. We're now, I think, the most unequal society in the whole of Europe, very close to America now as well. And I believe firmly that "austerity is a class project and that it disproportionately targets and affects working class communities and households", and, in doing so, as Cooper and Whyte have described it², protects concentrations of elite wealth and power,

and I think this is what we are really committed to trying to challenge.

We also hear this tension, this phrase all the time about ‘left behind communities’, and the community that I live in and engage with outside work is described as a very typical left behind community: a former pit town, absolutely destroyed by pit closures in the 1990s, but also by the loss of the textile industry in the area, part of the former industrial heartland of the UK, particularly the coalfield area which is where I come from originally too. So we’ve now got a lot of people in Mansfield – I can speak personally about this – who are right behind Leave, right behind Brexit. But people are very, very quick to judge, and I get this a lot when I speak at things like *The World Transformed* – there’s a metropolitan elite perception that people are all either very racist or thick. There are all kinds of assumptions and perceptions about why people are so angry, but it’s 30 years of abuse basically, their communities destroyed bit by bit.

So we’re now in a situation where 1.3 million Britons are employed in the gig economy. I did some work for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation a couple of years ago looking at issues of destitution in Nottingham, and everybody I spoke to was in work, so the crisis is not about work it’s actually about the kind of work that we have and the precarity of that work. We have a situation of completely inadequately shared resources; not all education is created equal as we know, so we’ve got fee paying schools, access to grammar schools, and we know that grammar schools in England only take a tiny proportion of pupils who are or have ever been eligible for free school meals. So that is 2% as opposed to 14% nationally.

And I think working class learners have been for a very long time perceived as defective or described as defective in numerous ways. I can describe this myself as someone who went from Bolsover to Cambridge, which was a strange transition, believe me. As “a stranger in a foreign land”³, Sarah Mann’s brilliant expression, of being in an education system that is actually quite alien if you’re from a very different cultural background. Where I used to have people shout things like, “Eh up, trouble at t’mill”, and things like that. So there is this extraordinary perception in our class-riddled culture. There are growing issues as we know of mental health problems, anxiety and depression, and that’s across FE, HE, and also in the adult residential colleges where I’ve done a great deal of research, and in schools. And I keep coming back to Raymond Williams’ brilliant phrase, “culture is ordinary”⁴, you know, that culture belongs to all of us. It’s not about elitism, it’s not about a particular perception of higher culture – culture is all of us, culture is ordinary. So that’s why I love him so much, Raymond Williams.

I wanted to think a little bit about privilege, inequality, and the Labour aristocracy as well. I’m proud to say that my father was a miner who went to Ruskin College, Oxford, and I feel that my confidence in my own background comes from a sense of being taught and learning from my father, who was radicalised by his experience of going through adult education at Ruskin College. And my grandfather who was a South Wales miner, who was a Left Book club member, and socialist. There is a Labour aristocracy, and I use the phrase advisedly, but I think that has been sadly eroded by the destruction of adult education. Even those very colleges themselves now are precarious, in tremendous difficulty many of them. We’ve seen the destruction of Coleg Harlech and Wedgwood Memorial College, and other adult education colleges just disappearing.

There’s always been, I think, a really interesting tension between the state and non-state educational provision. The 1919 Report was very committed to the idea that the LEAs (Local Education Authorities) were not necessarily the right people to provide the kinds of adult education that would connect with communities. They said, “We do not think that Local Authorities will, generally speaking, take bold steps for the provision of non-vocational subjects”, and they also said “non-vocational adult education has not in the past thrived in it”, in the state sector. They were concerned that the local authorities were far more focused on children’s education, as they should have been and understandably, and that the state would only act as a medium for encouraging and assisting the activities of universities and local educational authorities, and the educational work of voluntary bodies. It should do that and “we regard this as the main function of the State so far as education is concerned”. So they always saw it as an aide, not necessarily as the means of actually creating an educational system. They saw always a strong role for the non-state.

2. Cooper, V. & Whyte, D. (2017) ‘Introduction: The Violence of Austerity’, in Cooper, V. & Whyte, D. (eds.) *The Violence of Austerity*, London: Pluto Press, p.11
3. Mann, S. (2001) ‘Alternative Perspectives on the student experience: alienation and engagement’, *Studies in Higher Education* 26(1), p.11
4. Williams, R. (1958) ‘Culture is Ordinary’, in *Raymond Williams on Culture and Society: Essential Writings*, McGuigan, J. (ed.) London: SAGE, 2014

I think this is absolutely fascinating. I had the pleasure of going to the National Archives over the summer and looking at some of the correspondence connected to the 1919 report and the fear and anxiety which I think is there. I think adult education is essentially profoundly political, and I think they are afraid of us in lots of ways, those of us who have been through that kind of system. This was writ large by some of the testimony at the time, some of the comments at the time about a real tension and lack of trust, if you like, so I'll just read this quote out:

"...there is still a number of education committees who are unable to understand a desire for education of no direct utilitarian value, unless it be for purposes of personal accomplishment, and who suspect dark motives in the minds of those who desire such education. More especially is this so where the demand is for the study of problems which are controversial. It is within our knowledge that there are even today town councillors to whom the term 'economics' is synonymous with socialism. The majority of those who most desire to study do so probably because of the interest they have already taken in industrial or other public affairs."

– that Freirean conscientisation, trade unionists, etc.

"This is presumably the basis for the charge sometimes made by Local Authorities, and suggested even by some members of universities, that the classes 'encourage discontent and socialism'."

And I love this bit – one tutor was reputedly told upon requesting a room for meetings for educational purposes: *"If we let you have a room, you will make the place a den of anarchists."*

It is fantastic testimony and is there throughout all the correspondence, through all the letters. It is fascinating, it is a really fascinating glimpse into the history. And I sense that still, very definitely, that sense of people learning their political, social, economic context, and understanding their position in the world and being able to contest and challenge it is really important.

I often come back to Stuart Hall's prescient 1958 quote, and I believe this is absolutely centrally true whereby class and education have been at the centre of political and intellectual struggles for at least the last century. He said:

"Surely there has never been a greater cleavage between the tone of our society, its manner and forms, and the gross realities? What happens to a society rigidly class bound which uses continually the language of equality? What happens to an oligarchy which conceals itself behind the rhetoric of the popular democracy? What happens when large numbers are trained each year for responsibility and participation but where the sources of power and decision grow every day more remote? All our energies are expended in creating and consuming a culture whose sole purpose is to cover up the realities of our social life."

I think that's incredibly prescient in 1958 and so continues to be absolutely true.

The reason I like Raymond Williams so much is of course he was a university professor from Cambridge but he spent many, many years working as an adult educationalist with the WEA (*Workers' Educational Association*). He believed categorically that education is about being part of social change, not just observing but being fundamentally part of social change. It's not about remedying deficit or making up for inadequate educational resources, nor is it about just meeting the needs of a new society, and I've had lots of arguments as part of the Commission about this. It's not just about responding to the fact that AI is here and we need to be more responsive to the challenges of the digital world and so on and so forth, but it is about change, fundamentally being part of the change. Williams said that learning is not just about being "the bottle with the message in it, bobbing on the tides and waves of history"⁵ but instead that we have to be about being part of a process of social change itself and that the learning is fundamental to that. I do think that's a really important point, the social realities that we are actually facing, the rhetoric versus the reality. I'm a great fan of Diane Reay's writings and I saw her speak at *The World Transformed*⁶ recently. She says social mobility, which we're told is the way out – and my father would have always disagreed with this because he went straight back to the community he came from, newly empowered, newly knowledgeable – she said it's a red herring given the current high levels of inequality. Social mobility is primarily about recycling the inequality rather than tackling it. I think that's correct.

5. Williams (1983) 'Adult Education and Social Change: Lectures and Reminiscences in Honour of Tony McLean, WEA Southern District', in McIlroy, J. and Westwood, S. (eds.), *Border Country: Raymond Williams in Adult Education*, Leicester: NIACE, 1993, p.255

6. 'Radical pedagogy: What Is Education For?', at *The World Transformed*, Brighton, 21/9/19: <https://theworldtransformed.org/festival/2019/programme/radical-pedagogy:-what-is-education-for>

I also think that this focus on widening participation for those of us who have worked in this world – which I have, as well as within the university sector, widening participation – we are infatuated with a particular group of people in terms of widening participation, specifically 18 year-olds from under-represented groups, and even that is a moot point, into selective universities. But the total number of learners in further education and skills has fallen 26.5% over five years, and the decline in the numbers of mature part-time and full-time learners is catastrophic. I mean we're looking at a fall of almost 60% overall. So these are major challenges that we're facing.

Much of the current emphasis tends to be on young adults, which is also correct, but the group is really complex, the group of people who want to take on adult education in FE and beyond. We've got 1.9 million adults who study or train in colleges. Students over 19 in further education generate an additional £70 billion for the economy over their lifetimes, so this is not insubstantial. 30% of adults in colleges are from an ethnic minority background, so there is an incredibly important diversity element in terms of the learners in FE. 200,000 adult apprentices and 106,000 college students are aged 60 and over, so there is also that incredibly important age profile.

I think informal learning is at the heart of a lot of this as I've indicated. Williams was always concerned that that voluntary sector role, that community sector role, was about escaping the elite-controlled schoolhouse and university. It came through family, through churches, through community centres, through libraries, museums, reading groups. It was about debate, discussion and collectivism. You see important examples of people becoming aware of what's going on around them. In the army for instance, the wonderful Cairo Forces Parliament, if people have come across that; during the war people were also given a copy of the Beveridge Report and this was fundamental to the development of the Labour Party and its huge landslide victory after the war as well, in that people were becoming aware of their circumstances, social, political, economic. And I think that's what I was referring to with the Labour aristocracy, that knowledge and understanding: that you can challenge.

The importance of the evening classes in the NUM (*National Union of Mineworkers*), and I mentioned my father went through that route, he was actually supported by the NUM to go to evening classes first and then ultimately to Ruskin. So the important role that we still have around adult residential colleges, few in number now, in fact we had four but now of course Hillcroft, which was the only women's college, has merged with Richmond College. So we've got a bit of a problem: they're not even defining that entirely as an adult residential college purely for women any longer. And the important role of community education, but also with its mass destruction as a result of austerity. I've talked to lots of colleagues who were absolutely on their uppers financially in that world, so we have a massive issue here around rebuilding anything. I think particularly that learning as an adult, particularly for those from working class communities, people need to feel that they can actively participate in the construction of their knowledge, that they are not just passive recipients of knowledge. I think universities often do this very badly – don't recognise the importance of community-based knowledge, tacit knowledge and understanding at community level. Too often they think about knowledge transfer rather than knowledge exchange, and I've said this for the last seven or eight years but have not always been heard. I think education has to value and respect different cultural worlds and backgrounds and ethnically diverse communities and learners, and culture is ordinary, going back to Raymond Williams' phrase.

Adult learning has to be, I think, through collaborative sharing, small group work and interviewing other people on the street or in the neighbourhood, feeling engaged in that learning process. I think that the critical thing that adult education did so well and has done well, is being based fundamentally on a pedagogical approach that is about small group discussion and debate. I don't have a problem with online learning, incidentally, at all, but I do think that face-to-face connection where you talk to people, you hear other perspectives and other issues, is crucial and that's what adult education fundamentally did at its best. So adult work concerns the need to measure what goes on in the curriculum against their own experience and their own life stories. And I think without the chance of connecting to that lifetime of experiences, you know, if you've got a formal curriculum that doesn't recognise that, I think adult learners find it difficult to connect and engage with the learning experience.

Just to finish, really to reflect a little bit on those final resources for a "journey of hope", which is again one of Raymond Williams' important expressions, we're at an incredibly important time I think at the moment, obviously we're in the run up to an election as well so everything to play for. But I think political education for me is about criticality, it's about critical thinking, it's about consciousness, it's about being aware of your

situation in the world. So much at the moment distorts, as Stuart Hall describes⁷, the smoke and mirrors, so we don't always see what we're actually living. I've been involved for the last three years in *The World Transformed* really talking about adult education and I was kind of surprised that their learning platforms initially didn't have any mention of adult education at all, and I'm sure I wasn't the only voice asking for adult education to be taken seriously, but I have really pushed for it. There is a growing sense now that *The World Transformed* itself as an organisation is not just a fringe movement and is taking that very seriously. So there are two new research fellows working for *The World Transformed* who are now looking at what political education is taking place across the UK, and they're trying to develop a network and also a nexus of people who have the skills and abilities and are interested to promote some of the political education work.

In my other life outside work, I am Political Education Officer for Mansfield Labour Party, and I've been struck by people's passion and enthusiasm for getting together and having a debate or discussion. We've had two debates on Brexit which was quite scary I have to say, but really powerful, really powerful and not at all a bunch of people being, as I've said earlier, small-minded and bigoted. Not at all actually, it was much more nuanced than that. Okay you could say you're preaching to the converted to an extent, a group of Labour Party members, they are perhaps more open, but there was a genuine sense of people sharing all kinds of differences of opinion. I also led a session at *The World Transformed* in September about Brexit, but it wasn't about Brexit, the content or the detail, it was about what it has done to our ability to talk to one another, to communicate. We've got increasingly this shouting factory where people stand on opposite sides of the divide and just yell at one another. This was really more about critical discourse and the ability to talk to one another. I'm passionate about *The World Transformed*, I can see it is itself transforming. The first time I went, perhaps three years ago, I did feel this strong sense of a metropolitan elite, very London centric; it was held in Brighton as well. The following year it was in Liverpool, and I was already feeling a sense that there was a growing movement of people from areas like the one in which I live, starting to really argue the case for a more nuanced understanding of left behind communities. A few of us are trying to do that.

The *Raymond Williams Foundation* has been fundamental in my knowledge and understanding. I've learned so much from the people there I can't tell you, often older people who have been involved with the socialist movement in one way or another, the Left movement, for a long, long time and they've been my education in many ways. But they are great advocates for informal learning exactly as Raymond Williams said, the community-based education that we have, the "culture is ordinary" approach if you like, each day every day it's part of everyday life. So they promote informal learning structures. We have discussions in pubs, not everything's in pubs by the way, these two are, and philosophy in pubs. They're committed to the idea of informal learning structures generally. They do have many debates and discussions across different parts of the UK. And then of course *Adult Education 100*, coming back to this idea of life-wide education. The *Centenary Commission* that I've been part of, in that capacity as Chair of the *Raymond Williams Foundation*, has spent a year looking at different aspects of adult education. Our recommendations and final report come out on Monday [18th November 2019] so it's embargoed until then⁸. We're just about to send out some press releases, but there are 17 recommendations in *Adult Education 100's* final report for the *Centenary Commission*, and it has been a fantastic experience working with the WEA and working across a number of universities. I've been part of the steering group that has been doing all the work behind it, along with my colleague Professor John Holford at the University of Nottingham. It has been incredibly powerful working with the *Co-operative College* with Cilla Ross and other colleagues. What we discovered I think is that it's very easy to ignore informal, community-based education, so we, Cilla and I and Dr Nick Mahony from the *Raymond Williams Foundation*, have spent quite a lot of time going out interviewing at community level. We felt that this was really important, absolutely crucial to get that voice in there and to not focus exclusively on state and formal education, adult education, so we've spent a lot of time working in that area.

Finally, I think there is an opportunity here, we've got this great surge in social movements around us, particularly around climate change, *Extinction Rebellion* and other groups, and inequality, and I think this is a prime moment where we need to come together and challenge the status quo. I've just been doing some work as well for *The Society for Educational Studies* looking at the 1918 Education Act and relating that to the 1919 Report, and actually looking at some of these tensions around the state and non-state provision of education, really important. So a crucial time I think, an absolutely crucial time. Can I say just a few words about the

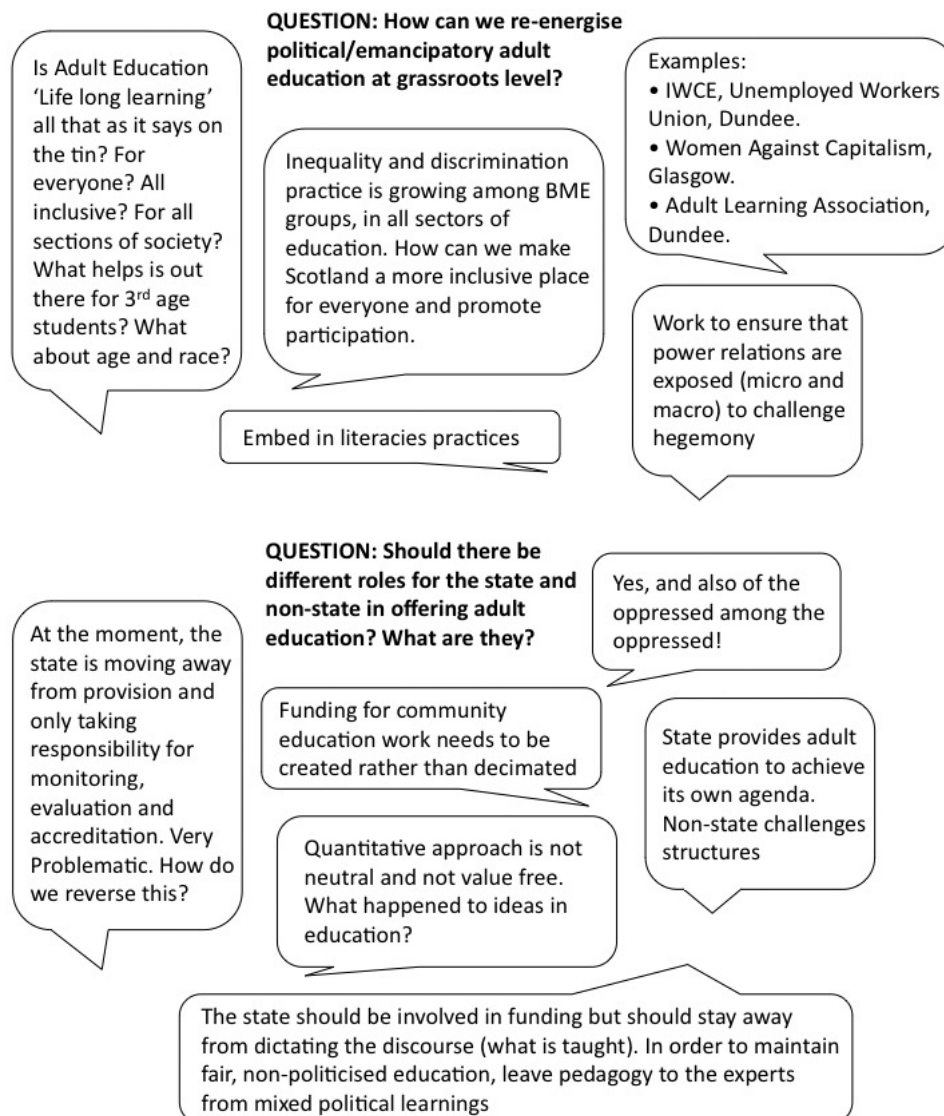
7. Hall, S. (1997) 'Race: The floating signifier', Jhally, S. (dir./ed.) Media Education Foundation, transcript: <https://www.mediaed.org/transcripts/Stuart-Hall-Race-the-Floating-Signifier-Transcript.pdf>

8. <https://www.centenarycommission.org>

report? When it comes out on Monday, I hope people rush out and go and read it. But obviously it's crucial that we have a partnership approach to this, so one of the key recommendations is going to be around having locally-based educational partnerships which look at education cradle to grave – particularly the way we have it at the moment is very atomised and truncated and chopped up into different segments in life – so this is about a seamless understanding of education. And I'm pleased to say the Labour Party, recently of course, has talked about this six year opportunity for people to continue to learn into adulthood. And obviously their national education strategies are now fundamentally starting to include elements around adult education which I'm enormously grateful for.

We're also suggesting strongly that there has to be a strategy at national level for adult education which is part of these locally based partnerships, so the strategy is taken to the community and is enacted at community level, and that there is a strong focus around community and informal learning within that. We're also saying that FE colleges have become in many instances disconnected from the communities they serve – I can say that certainly from some of the research I've done in Mansfield – and that that is partly about their governance structures. We are saying very strongly that FE colleges need to have locally based people as part of their trustee and governance structures because that's about local ownership. And crucially we're asking for financial support for this infrastructure. I don't know how it's going to go, I don't know what kind of reaction we're going to get, but it has been a fascinating experience being part of the *Commission* which has been a real mixture of people as well, it would be fair to say: captains of industry, myself, Cilla, a real mixture of people, Melissa Benn who is a journalist, and so on. It has been a fascinating journey for the last year and the culmination of our work is on Monday. Thank you very much.

Sharon asked two questions to the audience, here are the responses:



Sarah and I are going to do this session. We have three questions and I'm going to just say what they are now so you can think about them, but we will put them up towards the end anyway. First, where are the opportunities for powerful literacies today? Second, what resources and allies can help further them? Third, what might get in the way and how can these obstacles be managed or reduced? Those are questions we would like to ask you. We will put those up at the end but just in case you wanted to have a wee think about them.

In terms of literacy, what I'm thinking about is that there is always text somewhere involved in literacy. Now, obviously in the age of social media it's linked with visual and iconic information, but always some kind of degree of text is involved. Now people might say well there is oral literacy, my working definition in a sense is excluding that to some degree. But I think there's something that has to hold the idea of literacy or literacies together and that has something to do with text. I want us to start, this is my first slide, with 'Ideologies of Literacy Practice' by Mary Hamilton, and it's a chapter in a book that Sarah has over there. Hamilton talks about four distinct ideologies of literacy: Literacy for social control, that is the shaping of functionally and morally responsible people who will be economically productive citizens. Now, we've all heard of that one! Literacy as a cultural missionary activity: this ideology has strong roots probably in religiously influenced work around reading the Bible and so on, at least historically. But my own experience of working in the 1980s in what was called basic education at that point was also, in some respects, a cultural missionary activity of bringing enlightenment and access to poor people who hadn't acquired literacy skills. It wasn't stated so openly like that, but you could get a sense of this ethos informing it. Another ideology was literacy as a remedial activity for poor people who didn't quite have the capacity to acquire it at school, so it was part of providing people with learning difficulties who needed remedial help. And then finally she says: Literacy as an emancipatory activity, obviously linked with critiques of dominant culture, the ways in which schooling or limited forms of schooling was available and to how knowledge was distributed to people, and implied a radical critique of things as they existed and what needed to be done to make social change. So literacy in some accounts was always linked to some sense of action to change things.

So, two points to take from these four distinctions: One, the purpose and practice of literacy is contested. We often just assume somehow or other that it is straightforward, that it is just one type of thing, but clearly there are different types of literacy going on all the time. Two, the radical tradition, was always part of a kind of independent working class education: that is, independent from the state, from religious influence, and so on, and it was to serve the interests of working class communities and other marginalised or exploited groups. Literacy was woven into the fabric of organisations who were about resisting at community level. We always talk about adult education histories, and when Sharon was referring to Raymond Williams about adult education and change, it's about the process of change, it's not about adult education history, but adult education in history; that is, actively making history, being part of that social change.

Now I can only just sketch a few things, leaving out lots of stuff. But if we take the long view, if we go back way beyond 100 years of radical education, we can always see the importance of literacy for working class communities. For example, in 1822 there were 51 Scottish working class-controlled libraries without any middle class influence. Wanlockhead, in Dumfries and Galloway, was one of the first and was founded in 1756, and reflects that tradition of working class communities providing their own forms of literacy. They would produce their own libraries because they needed to use knowledge to further their own particular interest. So these institutions were the tip of an iceberg of a growing radical political social culture that wanted to educate themselves into looking at and examining the inequalities and so on that existed and what they could do about them. But they were not explicitly political in any simple sense. They provided a wide range of literature for a wide range of interests that people would become stimulated by. And that was much in the tradition of the idea of mutual improvement rather than a radical social purpose. But, for instance, many of the Chartist papers, in the 1830s/1840s, actually suppressed the political content to include a much wider range of material within them. This was an inclusive approach to radicalism. As one such convert to Chartism remarked, "The poetry of Coleridge and Shelley was stirring within me and making me a Chartist and something much more". That was in Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, a fantastic book.

The democracy movement of the 1830s/40s and so on provided a rich range of material, informal educational situations, the kinds of things Sharon was talking about, and provided their own institutions and ideas which

would help shape the values and the actions that they needed to take. The struggle for the vote throughout the 19th century came and went but was also always part of that wider struggle for dignity and human equality, and that always occurred within it. The Committee for Public Libraries in 1849 noted that it led to, “Exercising the minds of the labouring classes better than any school instruction”, and that’s in a book by Dobbs, written in 1919 on *Education and Social Movements*. The Committee on Public Libraries called this process of participation “education by collision”, and there were lots of collisions taking place. Traditional authorities running up against science, reason, those kinds of collisions, as well as collisions between the need for the growing discipline of factory life and the earlier popular cultural ways of living. The collision between widespread poverty and opulence that people were beginning to question why did they live in such a rich society and yet be so poor? And so we have literacies linked to the growth of a thriving culture challenging, opinionated, and questioning.

John Stuart Mill, the key liberal philosopher of that period, commented that the position which gives the strongest stimulus to the growth of intelligence is that of rising to power, not that of having achieved it. So there you go, Boris Johnson. Of course, this huge range of examples of social-political movements and institutions provided a kaleidoscope of demands for an independent working class education. As the 1919 Report recognised:

“The growth of movements which have as their aim the creation of a better social order is not less important than the progress of education itself...such movements create the background of aspiration and endeavour which is the foundation of more directly educational work.”

What I wish to highlight relevant to my theme, is that this involved, in Freirean terms, the practice of reading the word and reading the world. These are mutually constitutive, creating the possibilities for literacy to be in history, an essential part of those struggles for emancipation.

Fast forward very quickly then, the modern history of radical literacy, at least outside of Scotland, is associated with Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, a way of working and teaching with the oppressed. His philosophy that education is never neutral, had to be grounded in the themes from people’s lives, and the appropriate methodology for liberating was dialogical so that people – teacher and student – were interchangeable in their roles, reflecting an ontological equality into the educational experience. So, Freire has been a dramatic powerful influence in terms of practice of radical literacies but I would say not so much in Scotland actually, more generally in the field of adult education, but probably less specific to the practice of literacy in Scotland.

But getting to where we are now, these Freirean ideas can be connected very clearly with the idea of literacy as a social practice. Now that notion underpinned the *Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland* report in 2001 and is still seen as a core element of literacies practice. The idea that it is social, it’s a reciprocal process of people in relationships using text, and with other things as well, but using literacies because it relates to their context – their issues, their interests, and the idea that you build on people’s wealth, the knowledge and experience they bring to the situation, and the sense of a social dimension to the practice of literacies is really key. And that has been exploited by radical workers to be able to do a whole range of different types of literacy practices and not simply start from the idea of somehow or other – like in the remedial model – that there is a literacy student at the bottom rung of the ladder and they slowly will work their way up, and we can use a dipstick to measure where they are. So it challenges that notion.

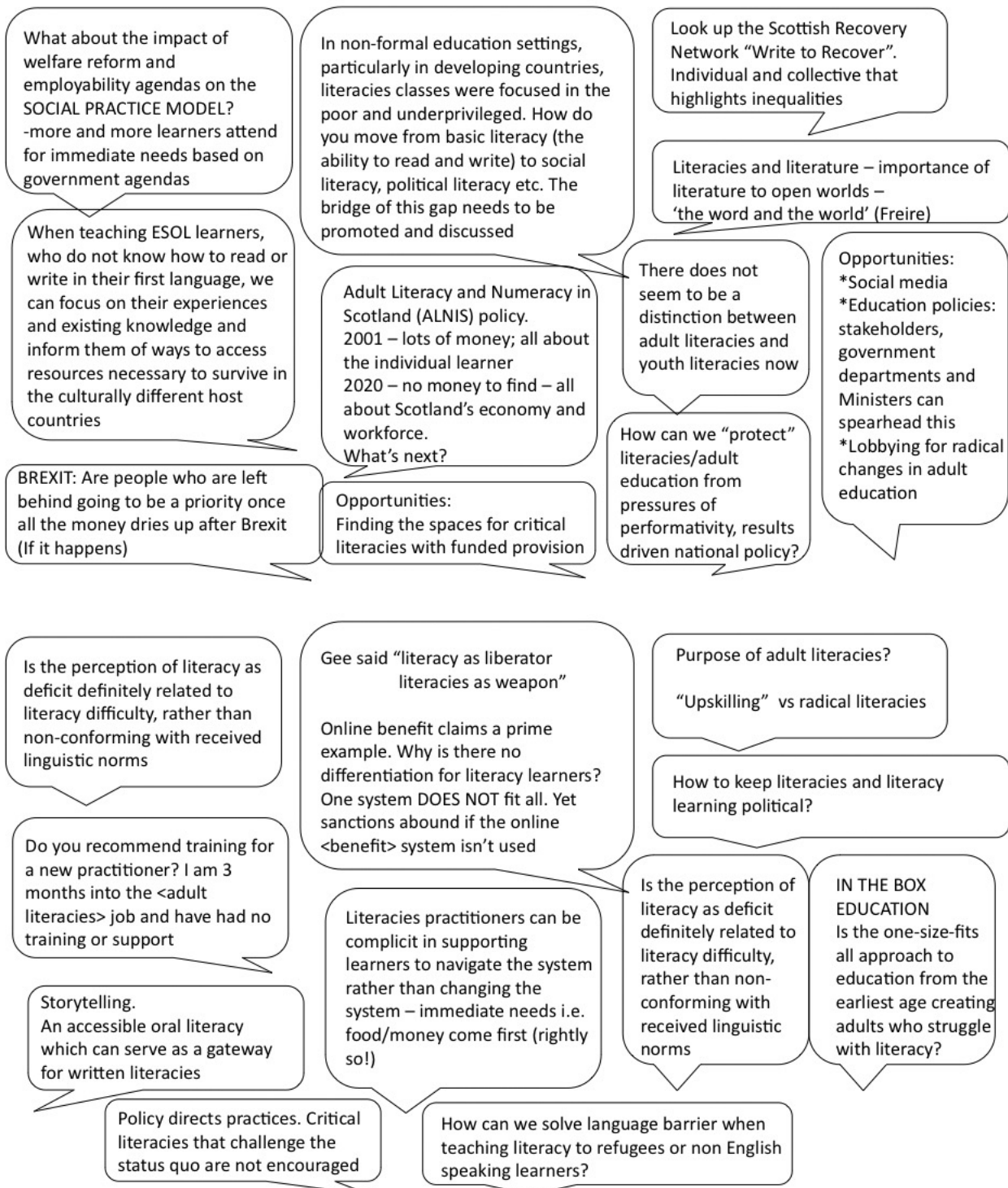
Of course, literacy practices have to be artful and they have to be thoughtful, they have to engage the struggles of different communities. In one of the anthologies that we produced with Mary Hamilton and Lyn Tett – where John Player’s work on football literacies uses the common interest of football as social practice – what brings people together to examine the world: globalisation, racism, economic inequalities, homophobia, sexism, all these things providing a reading of the world that was used to also write the word, to construct and deconstruct text and to reconstruct them, and so develop a richness in their literacy practice. So I would really recommend John’s chapter. In the same book, Alan Addison, who was involved in Scots family literacy practices, uses the language of people in poor communities in the north part of Edinburgh, using their everyday language as part of a resource for writing plays, for educating children and for educating adults. That powerful recognition that the adults who were involved in these activities that their language of the home was okay, that it wasn’t just inadequate English, but the natural language of the home, the family, the community, and therefore a rich resource for studying literacy.

In conclusion, radical empowering literacies need to connect or reconnect the word and the world; that is

what makes them powerful. Literacy is not a technical, neutral activity divorced from context, it's always part of a social practice. And the history of radical education is always part of those shared struggles of people trying to make some difference to their world. The lesson of history: as long as the world is a problem there are always going to be struggles for democracy and dignity and human equality. There will always be context for empowering literacies until we've cracked those problems. Sites of practice may change, policy contexts may alter that, but those enduring issues are there and they will not go away and therefore they are sites for radical empowering literacies.

Our question is where are the opportunities today, where are the problems, how do we engage with those, and we cannot sit back, as Freire has said, you sit back from that, you side with the powerful. You haven't got a choice. Thank you very much.

Jim asked the audience, "where are the opportunities today, where are the problems, how do we engage with those"? Here are the responses:



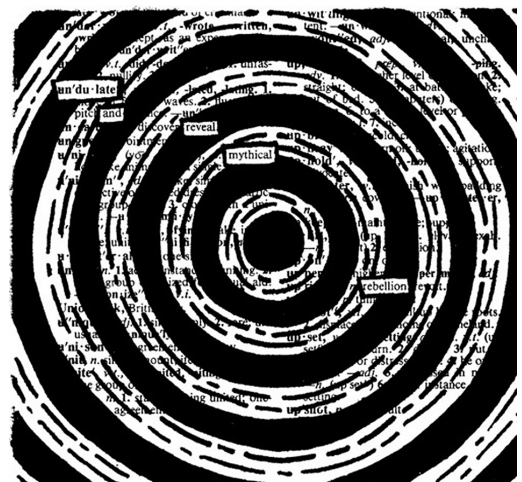
Sarah McEwan Literacies education : Looking forward

My name's Sarah McEwan. At the moment I work at the University of Dundee, I've been there for a year now in the Community Education team, which I'm really enjoying, and I like to say that in our undergraduate programme we've got a range of ages of learners who are doing their community education degree at the moment. Prior to working at the University, I worked for 19 years in local communities in Dundee doing a variety of different roles within that time. I worked for Dundee City Council but my job changed through those years. I didn't intend to be there for 19 years but that's what happens. I started off as a sessional youth worker and progressed through into youth literacies work, which then led me into adult learning. It wasn't somewhere I intended to go because youth work was always my passion but that's where my career journey went, and I'm glad it did.

When I was asked to come along and talk about the future of literacies in Scotland, I thought to myself I'm a bit out of touch because I've been involved in teaching for the past year. It has been at least six years since I was involved in pure literacies work but it has given me the opportunity to revisit and have a look and see what was it we did then, and it has kindled that passion again in myself and I've made links and had some conversations with other people working in the field. I had a look at a bit of research I did in 2003 – because I know the landscape was very different then. In literacies work, I started out doing it in 2003 as I said – in the introduction of this research I've noted that "The Scottish Executive has allocated funding of £51 million for the period 2001-2006 in a national drive to improve literacy and numeracy in Scotland". And I thought, that seems unbelievable. I didn't realise how lucky I was to be working in that landscape with those resources. It wasn't just about the funding that was available then, but there was also a political will – literacies was high on the agenda, it was high on the agenda nationally and locally within local authorities. And I think Jim made reference to it, there was a real passion and you felt like you were on the leading edge, there were resources there to really take creative approaches to the work we were doing. The funding was there, the ideas were there, the passion was there. I think a lot of that is still there, apart from maybe the funding!

So I've probably spoken about some of this but just to say what my passions are, who I am. I'm very passionate about animals, I'm a vegan, and that's a picture of my dog. I love beaches and I feel passionate about social justice, especially in terms of inequalities, many of which relate to literacies. I see inequalities on a daily basis where I live in Dundee – it has been my home for the past 20 years – but also in our wider society, in Scotland. Creativity and arts which I'm also very passionate about, I think in the work that we do we have to bring that in because we haven't found the solutions yet, so we need to be coming up with creative ways of doing things and working with people and involving people.

I've said a bit about that, the work I was doing. I was really lucky at the time because certain people came together: there was myself as a youth worker, with a little bit of knowledge and some funds, and we were able to work and pay for resources and other workers. I worked in a small team of people: a poet, a community arts worker, and a DJ. And the four of us created a little team: how are we going to do this work? We're not sure, but let's talk to as many people and young adults as we can and let's try as many different things and approaches as we can. I must say we put quite a lot of blood, sweat, and tears into that work, and it was one of the most rewarding years of my career. I could talk about that all day but I know we've only got 15 minutes, but what I did bring along, and I'll pass them around, is just an example of some of the work that we did. This was a little book of poems that was produced by a group we were working with of young people in Dundee who were fighting against child exploitation, and we worked with them for about six months. Initially it was difficult to get much response from them, so taking a traditional communication route of just talking and asking questions didn't really yield very much. We did a bit of music, we did a bit of art. When we brought in poetry it really took off and you can see by some of the material that's in the books how much the young people expressed themselves through that medium, that in reading one poem you could find out more about a young person's life, their needs, their joy, their pain, than maybe months of talking and questioning might have revealed. Anyway, I'll pass these around and you can have a look.



I guess what I'm trying to say is that there are more ways to express ourselves than the traditional dominant ways that we see literacies within our society. And for me literacies has always been about voice, not just about being able to speak and be heard but also that knowledge that what you've got to say is valuable. Even if it doesn't fit in with the norm and the dominant way that we communicate and express ourselves you still have something very valuable to contribute.

Enough about me. Literacies in Scotland today, what does it look like? Is the future for literacies bleak or bright? Let's go with that for starters. Who thinks it is bleak? Okay, a small number, you're in the minority, that's alright, you're allowed to be, that's great. What about bright? Well, I had a wee dig about to try and find out what is actually happening? I know in Dundee there's still a dedicated team of literacy workers within adult learning, within the Communities department of the city council, so I knew that was happening in Dundee. But I also knew that the picture wasn't the same in other parts of Scotland and that it was probably quite unique to have a dedicated literacies team. So I had an ask around to see what other people were doing and found that there are still literacies workers out there and some of you have put up your hands and identified yourself today. Not everybody is working in that traditional "you're a dedicated literacies worker" role. So often it has been merged into a more generic role – but it's still there, so that was good to see. I am only really speaking about Tayside and Fife. I did speak to Laura McIntosh, who works for *Education Scotland*, and she informed me that the *CLD (Community Learning and Development) Adult Literacies* network has been re-established by *Education Scotland*. That network brought mainly managers from Local Authorities together to talk about what people were doing across Scotland, so that has been re-established. She also said there was quite a healthy representation from across Scotland at that, so that gave me a little bit of hope in my heart that literacies work is still there on the agenda, certainly within Local Authorities and for managers.

It would be useful to map of what's happening across Scotland: The *CLD Standards Council*⁹ are, as part of their re-registration process, asking people what their job title and role is. So in the future, that might give us a picture of who's doing the work. Importantly, the work is still going on, people are still out there, they're doing it. However, literacies does not always appear in Local Authority community plans, literacies isn't always mentioned.

Just a few other things to consider: Where are we? There was all the funding channelled into literacies work in the early 2000s, but where are we now? Have we solved it? Have we changed the face of literacies in Scotland? I don't think so. The *Scottish Survey of Adult Literacies*¹⁰ in 2020 identified that 26.7% of adults in Scotland may face occasional challenges with their literacies, their functional literacy skills. We don't have an update on that but I did have a look at the *Curriculum for Excellence*¹¹ report produced by the Scottish Government, which stresses that assessments are now based on teachers' professional judgements about the stage young people are at in terms of their progress and reaching their attainment stages. This report was produced last December, so it was for 2017-2018, and as you can see, teachers across Scotland were saying that 73% of pupils were ready in terms of writing and 79% in terms of their reading. So that still leaves us with almost a quarter who are judged as not being functionally literate or are falling behind. So I would ask you to think about what does that mean if you are in that third or that 20% who aren't reaching those stages? What if you're one of the 26% who is facing occasional challenges with their literacies? What does that mean in terms of your everyday life? I would say you're then at the risk of being shut out from parts of society or being left behind altogether. I think where it says "occasional challenges" maybe doesn't quite tell us what that actually means. It maybe doesn't quite capture the seriousness of that, if that's in your own life and you can't navigate a part of society or feel included within it.

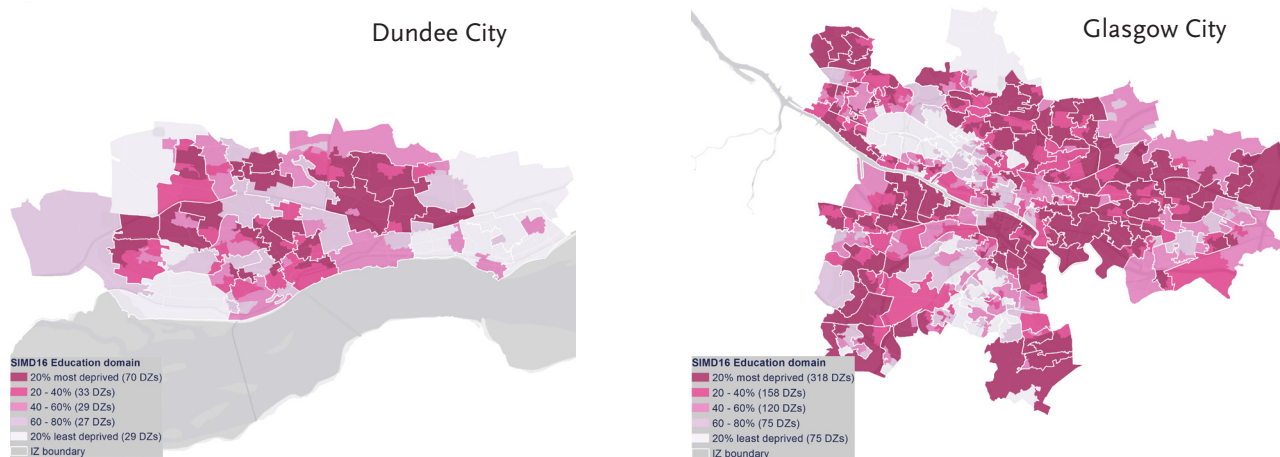
These are the *Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2016* maps. I just brought the ones related to education. The darker red patches are the data zones with the 20% highest deprivation in terms of education. For example: working age people gaining qualifications, proportion of young people not in full time education, employment or training, and proportion entering education, employment or training. So, it appears that in Dundee there are 71 data zones that are in the 20% highest deprivation¹²; in Glasgow it is 318.

9. See: <http://cldstandardscouncil.org.uk>

10. St.Clair, R. Tett, L. and Maclachlan, K. (2010) *The Scottish Survey of Adult Literacies (SSAL)*, Edinburgh: Scottish Government

11. The *Curriculum for Excellence* is Scotland's National Curriculum for young people aged 3-18 years, see: Scottish government (2018) *Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) Levels 2017-2018*, St. Andrews House, Edinburgh

12. Scottish Government (2016) *Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2016*, Edinburgh



Some things to think about when you're going to have your discussion. We've had a look at what the statistics are telling us, what the workers out in the field are telling us in terms of literacies work is still there. But what is the wider picture? The world that we're living in is different today than it was even a couple of years ago. An important consideration is the online world, the faceless society we're moving towards where it's really difficult to actually speak to a person when you're trying to access services or just go about your day-to-day living, and more-and-more the push for everything to be online and to be digital. I'm not against online, I just think you can't replace what you get from coming together and having that connection with people and speaking to people. If you're struggling to navigate the world, making things online and not having somebody you can just speak to produces another set of challenges, a new set of challenges. So, thinking about that landscape we're in, I think there is often an assumption that everyone's got a mobile phone or a smartphone or even internet access, and not everyone does. I think the language and the narrative sometimes suggests that everyone has access to the digital world.

Also, another consideration that came up when I was speaking to workers involved in ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) work, and work with Syrian refugees and people coming for ESOL support was that it sometimes becomes apparent that people are experiencing literacies difficulties in their own first language. This can be challenging for ESOL tutors or workers because they can teach English technically but they're not always sure how to tackle the literacies aspect of it. That's another thing just to think about. Thinking about the employability agenda, and the relevance to literacies: we need to consider the kinds of jobs people are getting pointed towards or pushed into instead of maybe having the opportunity to express themselves or address some of these skills. The demands and skills I'm thinking about, are the demands from the world we experience and the skills of the literacies workforce who are working within local communities. Have we adapted our skills to meet the demands that people are coming forward with? The ageing workforce within our sector means literacies workers who have a wealth of skills and knowledge are soon going to leave and retire. Hopefully they'll volunteer and come back and still work within communities, but are we potentially going to lose some of those skills and how do we make sure that knowledge gets transferred?

An urgent example is the impact of welfare reform within our local communities and the tasks it is putting on people; the different nature of tasks that people have to navigate in order to get money, where they are possibly signing up for things they don't understand. I was thinking about the conditionality agreements that people sign, and maybe don't realise what they're agreeing to when accessing the benefit system. When I revisited some of my research from 2003, I thought it was still relevant today. One of the young people I spoke to was an 18 year-old man and I was just asking about where might he come up against those occasional difficulties, those challenging daily activities and he said: "When I get a letter from the social¹³ that really hurts me, I don't understand the lingo of the social".

I think that research is very important. What does the future of literacies in Scotland look like? I'm making that my mission, to look at this in more detail and speak to people. So if anybody is interested in being involved in that or speaking to me some more that would be great. Come and see me at some point during the day and we can have a wee chat about that.

My final question to you is what literacies is about? Keeping in mind that the answer to that question is about connection, it is about belonging, it's about navigating your way around the world you live in and it's about your voice.

13. 'the social' – commonly used term for the welfare benefits office in the UK

Some background

I'm giving you a whistle-stop tour of the year of 1919 in terms of the tumult that was 'the world'. I will look very specifically at the experience of the struggle for independent working class adult education in Scotland and to some extent beyond. 1919 was certainly a tempestuous year: it was year two of the Russian Revolution and there was a revolutionary wave of working class struggle that was engulfing the world at this point.

So, 1919 was a year of revolutions, there was the German Revolution that had begun in 1918 and effectively brought the First World War to an end. There were Soviet or Council republics in different parts of Germany, particularly Bavaria and Saxony, and at times there was, effectively, a civil war going on. There was a short-lived Hungarian Revolution in 1919, and across the Atlantic – because it was a worldwide wave of struggles and revolutionary upsurges – there were the Seattle and Winnipeg general strikes. We tend to think about the struggles at that time as being European, but they were worldwide. The Seattle general strike involved I think around 100,000 workers who in response to deteriorating conditions at the end of the war – heightening of prices of goods and poor housing – started the first general strike in that part of North America. The strikers, in effect, ran Seattle for around six days, as civil authority collapsed. The Winnipeg general strike was about six weeks long and there was a similar level of struggle.

Bringing it closer to home, the Irish Independence struggle that was at its height in that point and including in that were particular working class struggles that expressed themselves in the establishment of a Soviet – partly in replication of what was happening in Russia and in Germany. There were police strikes in London which would eventually lead to the banning of police trade unions, there was a Dover Mutiny of demobilised or demobilising sailors, there were riots right across the UK in response to deteriorating conditions post-war, riots in my own home town of Coventry, in Luton and possibly most famously in Liverpool where there were, of course, tanks on the street. And here in Glasgow at the same time as in Belfast there were engineering strikes and strikes of shipbuilders.

But we've got to go even further back in time to really understand the origins of independent working class education. In 1899, Ruskin College in Oxford was established, my *alma mater*, and it was established to give working class men – there were no women students until 1919 – a liberal Oxford-style education. So, although it was linked to the trade union movement it couldn't be considered a trade union-type college. Prior to the First World War there was a rank and file upsurge in the working class right across the UK, described nowadays as the 'Syndicalist Revolt'. This struggle was reflected at Ruskin College where a character called Noah Ablett, a South Wales miner, objected to the economics taught at the College being laissez-faire and pro-capitalist. He argued against this and started lecturing in Marxian economics. The College came down on this behaviour during the Ruskin students' strike of 1907 and what was known as the 'plebs revolt'. The revolt led to the foundation of the Plebs League, which was an independent working class educational organisation and the birth of what I would say was recognisable independent working class education, with the Central Labour College being established in England at that time.

We can't really not talk about another development – the Workers' Educational Association – not least because they have the word 'worker' in their title. The WEA had been established in 1903 with a similar kind of ethos to the Ruskin College project, but never really took off in Scotland. The first Scottish branch of the Workers' Educational Association was established in Springburn, but by 1909 it had collapsed and it didn't re-emerge until 1912, with branches in Edinburgh and the East Coast of Scotland. So, in 1918/1919 the WEA was only able to run six centres in the whole of Scotland; five in Edinburgh and one in Aberdeen. 1919 also saw the WEA reach out to the Trades Union Congress and the establishment of the Trades Union Committee. The WEA were involved very

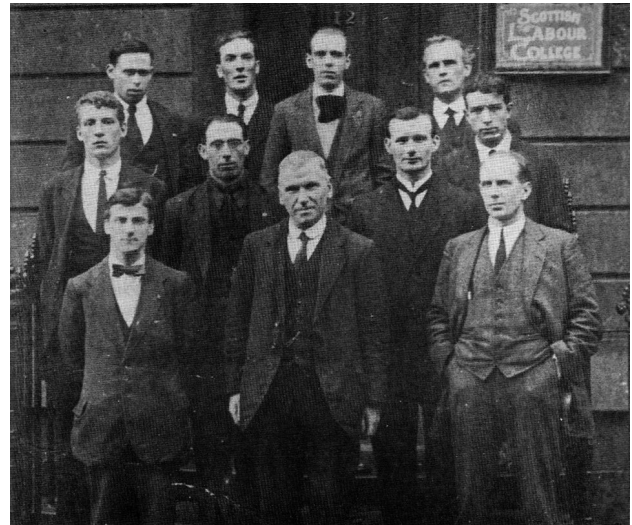


much in partnership working and they were really good at reaching out to other educational organisations, particularly the university extra-mural projects. The picture there is of a WEA meeting with academics from the University of Oxford in 1907.

We're in Scotland at last.

Scotland in 1919 was a very interesting place to be, to say the least. There were the January strikes of up to 70,000 workers, mostly engineers and shipyard workers. This strike was organised semi-officially, almost unofficially, by a rank and file trade union body, known then as the Scottish Workers' Committee. And this led to events that are now famous, such as Bloody Friday and the battle of George Square. Around this time also saw the earliest developments towards the establishment of a Communist Party under the influence of the Russian Revolution. There had been a preparatory conference established in 1916 to set up a Scottish Labour College on the lines of the Central Labour College in England. A major figure in the development of the Scottish Labour College was Scotland's most famous socialist John Maclean, but between 1916 and 1919 most of the adult independent working class education was undertaken by Plebs League members based mostly in Fife, particularly in Cowdenbeath, who were therefore miners. Adult education was also provided by the Plebs League and the Socialist Labour Party in the Central Halls in Glasgow, which I actually walked past today. There were classes at St Mungo's, as far away as Dumbarton and Bellshill, Wishaw and also in Falkirk and in several parts of Fife.

The Scottish Labour College stood essentially in opposition to the kind of working class education the Workers' Educational Association were providing. They were partisan, they believed in teaching a Marxian version of economics. They were socialist in politics and they believed in independence from the established educational organisations such as the universities. In this picture, the dude in the middle at the front is, of course, John Maclean.



Pretty much everybody behind him are tutors and students, and a lot of students became tutors. My guess is that most of those people there are miners. 1919/1920 was the first proper year of the Scottish Labour College. One problem that they faced between 1916 and 1919 was money – getting money out of the trade union movement because with the struggles taking place at that time, the unions were having to support their own members. There was an element of, shall we say, 'slight distrust' of the Marxist agitators that were in the Plebs League and focused on adult education. But eventually they got enough money together to get accommodation in two places. One was the Liberty Rooms, the home of the Glasgow Anarchists at the time, and the other was the Scottish Business Training College on Bath Street. So there was quite a contrast there. The Monday-to-Friday evening classes were a massive success, but the day classes were a much more limited success and had to be abandoned. Can you imagine why that was? Yes, people had to go to work!



Amongst the tutors, worth a mention, were William McLaine and of course Helen Crawford, a very famous Glasgow socialist who had been involved in the rent strikes in 1915 and went on to become a leading member of the Communist Party. There were thirty classes in Glasgow over two semesters, totalling about 850 students in Glasgow alone in the first semester. And what did they teach? They taught economics of course, history, English composition, maths, public speaking, shorthand, political science, cooperation, imperialism or world revolution – of course no adult education curriculum is a proper curriculum without that, and Esperanto. There was some opposition to the teaching of Esperanto, even then some people thought it was a bit of a waste of time, but it was really quite central to the Scottish Labour College's curriculum, and it was a big success.

But the College wasn't just in Glasgow. In that first year there were 51

classes outwith Glasgow, mostly in mining areas such as Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, and Ayrshire, but also up in Aberdeen. They started moving into the WEA territory on the East Coast, Edinburgh, Dundee, Fife, and Stirlingshire. So it wasn't just a Glasgow phenomenon – they didn't want it to be – they wanted it to be fit for the entirety of Scotland.

A little bit about after 1919.

After 1919, on a global level, there was a waning of the revolutionary wave. It had really reached its high point in 1919 and it carried on into '20/21 and right through to '23 in different parts of the world. This was reflected in the movement for independent working class education, but at the same time a different perspective started to emerge. In 1919 it felt like the revolution was upon us, the actual workers revolution was imminent, and that was reflected in the politics of the independent working class educators. However, as those things died down and were defeated in many ways, there developed a lot of political struggles on the Left, a lot of sectarianism and a lot of internal fighting. And John Maclean became very marginalised. He was in and out of prison quite a lot for various reasons including sedition, and while he was in prison people did actually conspire against and marginalise him. There's a lot we could talk about but we don't have time today.

People started moving into the Scottish Labour College who were becoming more moderate and influenced by people from the right-wing of the Independent Labour Party. The ILP were a mass party in Glasgow at the time and sent most of the MPs of the labour movement to Westminster, with fewer MPs from the Labour Party itself. In 1921 the Scottish Labour College affiliated with the National Council of Labour Colleges, which was probably no bad thing in itself. In 1926 the Plebs League, which had an independent existence up until then, both in Scotland and the rest of the UK, was absorbed into the National Council of Labour Colleges (NCLC). In a certain ironic twist, the NCLC was eventually amalgamated with the WEA's trade union committee in 1964. So between the 1920s and the 1960s the NCLC was, in Scotland as in the rest of the UK, the sole independent working class education provider. There are some numbers that I thought I should give. Up until 1926 the Scottish Labour College grew and grew. It attracted far more trade union funding as the years went on and recruited more and more students, so that by 1924-25, for example, they had close to 6,000 students enrolled in 224 classes in Scotland. So we can say that at its high point it was a massive success, certainly in Scotland and arguably beyond.

If there were two questions that I had for today: Is there an independent working class education revival? Is that going on as we speak? Maybe even here today, who knows? And question two, what has to be different about independent working class education today given the developments in grassroots – from below. Education, not just in the UK, not just in Scotland, but across the world? Those are your questions folks.

Wendy Burton Trade Union Education : Looking forward

What I wanted to do is tell you a bit about Scottish trade union learning: some of the union learning we've been involved in and the work we'd like to see going forward, some of the issues that we face in doing this work and what we would like to see in the future. I do know some of you here today, but could I just get a show of hands if you do know anything about Scottish union learning? Good, quite a few. I'll try not to bore you too much then.

We were established in 2008, but we evolved from earlier STUC (Scottish Trades Union Congress) learning initiatives, and since 2001 the STUC has obtained funding from Scottish Government to help unions build capacity and learning opportunities for members in workplaces throughout Scotland. Funding also enables the training of union reps, including learning reps, equality reps, health and safety, through TUC Education Scotland, which is a separate organisation to the STUC but I'll not get into all the politics of that. But we do fund direct training that takes place in Scotland through the TUC.

We've got two different strands: we've got the union rep education and then we've got the union learning for workers. My remit focuses mostly on union learning and we take a collective approach in facilitating this. The learning ranges from literacy and numeracy skills through to employability, vocational and trade skills, and opportunities for pathways into further and higher education. We used to be able to provide more leisure-type courses but over the last four or five years we've moved to a more vocational model. That's partly because of funding restrictions, but also it's because of the demand that we were getting from workers. Workers want

skills that will help them progress in the workplace. And I should say that all of the learning that we organise is open to all workers in an organisation, not just the union members, although unions do use that as a tool to recruit.

I should also mention *Fair Work* at this stage. We're funded through the *Fair Work Directorate* in the Scottish Government, and although the concept of 'fair work practices' is something that has been a key focus for trade unions for a long time, the principles are now enshrined in a framework and promoted by the Scottish Government, and union learning plays a pivotal role in the creation of the 'fair workplace'. These principles are: effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfilment, and respect.

So over the years we've built strong union learning rep structures. We now facilitate around 9,000 work-based learning opportunities a year; about five years ago it was around 4,000 so it's more than doubled in the last few years, despite not getting any additional funding. That 9,000 is through a combination of our own funded learning and courses that are also funded by the unions themselves, by employers and by other partner organisations that we work with. All of this encourages workers to engage more confidently, not just in work but at home with their families and in their social, community, and civic lives.

I also want to say that union learning isn't just about putting on courses – there's a lot of development activity being undertaken across different workplaces and sectors. I would like to give you some examples but the main thing that we're seeing is that unions are actually driving the learning and skills agenda with employers so that they become aware of the positive contribution that learning makes to individuals and to the workplace. There are many workplaces and centres where the skills of workers aren't recognised and the responsibility for training is falling unfairly on individual workers. One really big example, current example, is that of the social care sector. Earlier this year the *Fair Work Convention* produced a report on the conditions within the sector. It's a massive sector and still growing: around 200,000 workers throughout Scotland, and the average wage is less than £10 an hour. 19% of workers are on zero-hours contracts and despite the profession becoming really prominent – it's a highly professionalised service – the responsibility for skills is falling on individual care workers. When we looked into it a bit more we realised the issue wasn't that there's a lack of skills, the issue is the failure of the sector to realise and recognise the high level skills that the workers have: technical skills in dispensing medicine, advanced emotional and personal skills in dealing with vulnerable people with complex and social care needs. Workers within this sector do have an abundance of skills that we all call on in different points of our life, but these workers who care for those greatest in need they're not rewarded with a decent wage and terms and conditions. UNISON is, however, playing an important and crucial role in supporting these workers to build and develop their skills base and help them gain accreditation for the skills that they have.

Another example I'd like to highlight is the work of UNITE the Union in the construction industry, dealing with small sub-contractors to try and overcome logistical challenges of providing training that people need to remain working in the sector. I don't know if you're aware of the CSCS (Construction Skills Certification Scheme) card, it's a skills card workers need to get on site and it involves periodic assessments and training. And for skilled workers who are at the end of the supply chain of sub-contracting arrangements this presents almost impossible barriers. It has been a real challenge working with sub-contractors because they're often suspicious of unions or hostile towards them, but UNITE has now worked with over 15 private companies and supported 400 workers in obtaining these skills cards. We think that is a real achievement, although again it should be the employer who is taking responsibility for that. UNITE has also been very proactive in organising opportunities as part of its redundancy support programme, and I'm sure you will all be aware of events recently at Caledonian University in Glasgow, Dunlop in Dundee, and Thomas Cook all around Scotland.

We're also heavily involved in the finance sector through Aegis the Union, based mostly in Aegon which is a large financial services organisation in Edinburgh. It has been very segregated among customer care, call centre and back office staff, who are all quite highly qualified with good financial qualifications. But there was a really high turnover of staff in an area in Edinburgh with quite high employment. So we worked with the union and the employer to review the customer service role, and recognising how vital that is as the interface between customer and organisation. With changes in financial regulation – we didn't realise at the time but we know better now – it doesn't matter what company you're dealing with, the products are all more or less the same. The main difference is in customer care and how you get treated when you phone them up to ask them about something. So, we wanted to focus on that customer care element and Aegon tended to recruit university graduates, very highly qualified, but it wasn't working. The first thing we did was work with the

employer to encourage them to take on Modern Apprenticeships for the customer care roles and this was a much better fit in terms of recruitment. In the last few years there have been 239 Modern Apprentices starting in Aegon, 19 in the current year, and now the trade union is the first point of contact for the apprenticeship programme within that workplace. We also worked with SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework) to introduce a Level 8 award to transform the training for frontline staff and providing an HNC qualification. In the last few years we've had 473 staff obtain this qualification, and 68 in the last year. We feel this is real progress in unions driving forward learning and skills within a workplace. Again, this wasn't just about the skills, it was about the status and the importance of the roles that people were employed in that wasn't being recognised.

I've lots of other examples – and teaching unions, we've done a lot of work with them. We've done a lot of work with RMT, with CalMac, particularly on apprenticeships as well. I could go on and on but if anyone is interested please come and talk to me about it. What I will say is that in terms of apprentices we've also provided a lot of support around literacy and numeracy and mentoring to help young people cope in the workplace and to improve their skills. And everyday skills is an important area of our work, and by that I mean the literacy, numeracy, basic IT, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), and support for learners who may have dyslexia or other learning differences and disabilities. That is a core area of work for us. But increasingly that has been known to include digital skills and then cyber resilience skills and we've had bits of funding to help us support people in the workplace who needed to learn these skills and also to be safe when they're online. Digital skills is one of the fastest growing areas of our work, but the other is mental health awareness and mental health first aid, and I think that's a reflection of today's workplace.

One other area that I'd like to highlight is our leadership and equality programme. It was well recognised that the majority of union leaders were white, male, and of a certain age. So we developed a programme to offer opportunities to potential leaders of the future who are young, women, from black and minority ethnic groups, with disabilities, from the LGBT+ community, everyone that we could engage with we have tried. Up until last year we had around 600 people go through this programme. It's running again this year and the demand is there for this to continue so hopefully we'll see changes in union leadership soon as well.

This is all really important work for us and it's work that we do want to take forward, but there are real challenges; funding – we operate a two-year programme, it's approved annually by Scottish Government. That hinders long term planning and creates insecurity for staff and the unions that we work with. Also, our core funding has remained at the same level for ten years so it's pretty much unsustainable in terms of the support that we can provide to unions and to learners. In addition to what I've said about employers not recognising skills, there is a lack of training offered by employers themselves; they always favour training for higher grade workers, and those on lower grades don't get the opportunities. Employers are also quite unwilling to release staff to undertake learning during working time. Precarious workers are really difficult to organise learning for because of unreliable zero hours contracts, last minute shift changes and a lack of union representation. It's similar with freelance and self-employed workers, and around 10% of our learners don't actually have an employer. Older workers are also being disadvantaged in the job market with recent investment focusing on youth unemployment, but we are working with unions and employers to try and become more age inclusive and provide better job security for those already in work and having to work much longer.

There's a lack of learning providers as well. For a lot of our courses we find it difficult to find suitable providers due to the nature of the learning, the method of delivery, fitting around shift patterns and caring responsibilities, or the geographical area – and in the Highlands and Islands that is our biggest challenge, it's the geography that really causes issues for us. But also there's a lack of affordable part time further and higher education provision. Workers can't give up their jobs, and that was mentioned earlier today, to study full time and many don't want to study online for reasons that have already been highlighted. I mean, I myself was lucky to benefit from evening classes and that's how I started my first degree, but this hasn't been a viable option for people over recent decades. We also have the changing labour market, rapid speed of technology, automation, there's a lot of fear among workers, how do we support them through that? And then there are real challenges in supporting workers with learning differences and disabilities because they're trapped in low skilled, low paid jobs without support from their employer. We estimate that around 5-6% of our learners declare a disability but others prefer not to say, so it's really difficult to quantify, but we think it's because they don't want their employers to know.

Is there hope for the future? Maybe. We're working, or we're going to be working, closely with Scottish Government, Education Scotland, the WEA, Learning Link Scotland, Newbattle Abbey College, and other

national partners to help develop the new Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland which is due to launch next year, and some of you here are involved in that process. Our involvement is really critical to ensure that adult learning will reduce inequality by developing better skilled, educated, confident, and empowered workers. But it's essential that there is adequate funding and resources to support the new strategy or we won't succeed.

What do I want for the future? I've got a great big wish list. I want more Scottish Government funding and longer term funding, I want to see greater employer investment in learning and skills and not just for the higher grades. I want upskilling and retraining for older workers to become a priority, and I want to see unions engaging more with employers around learning and skills. They seem to be doing quite a good job, we just need them to do more of it. But also unions need to engage with younger workers or unions won't survive, and I think that the current climate crisis is the perfect opportunity for unions to engage with young people and that that is what we need to do.

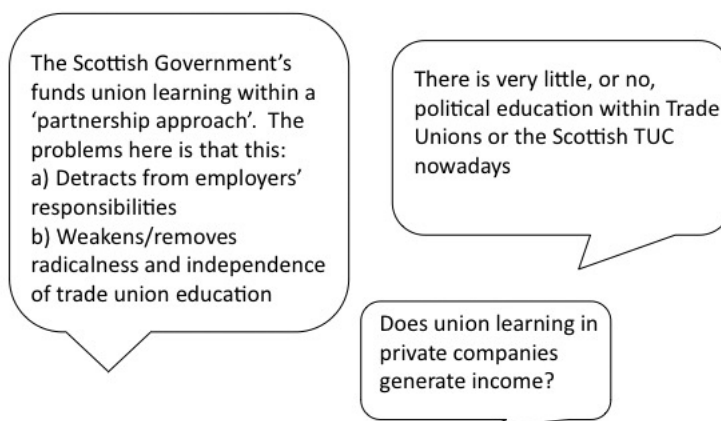
More generally I want every adult to be able to read and write. If I can use my favourite Che Guevara quote: "A country that does not know how to read and write is easy to deceive", and we're always in fear of that happening. I want learning opportunities that benefit all adults, whether they're in work or not. I want a progressive model for affordable part time further and higher education and an improved widening access programme for adults, and I want a highly developed adult learning workforce with structured career paths. And I also want all professionals, whether they work in education, health, social care, early learning, the police, job centres, other public service workers, I want them all to be equipped with information so that they can signpost potential learners to the most suitable provision. And if I can end here, I just want to come back to the concept of union learning and Fair Work. We can't have effective voice without making sure everyone is heard. We can't have respect and security for some and not for others. We can't gain greater fulfilment and opportunity unless everyone has the tools to upskill, reskill, and progress within the workplace.

The questions I have, well the first one was: Is union learning radical today? Because I think a lot of what we're doing we've just become accustomed to it and I don't know if it is quite so radical anymore. Maybe we need to be more radical. My second question was: How do we build hope for the future for workplace learners who are experiencing precarious employment, zero hours contracts, lack of opportunity, and they're expected to continue working later in life? And then I had a third one, about how can we encourage greater investment in learning and skills for adults? Thank you.

Derek and Wendy posed these questions to the audience:

- Is there an independent working class education revival?
- What has to be different about independent working class education today given the developments in the grassroots – from below?
- Is union learning radical today?
- How do we build hope for the future for workplace learners who are experiencing precarious employment, zero hours contracts, lack of opportunity, and they're expected to continue working later in life?
- How we can encourage greater investment in learning and skills for adults?

Responses were as follows.



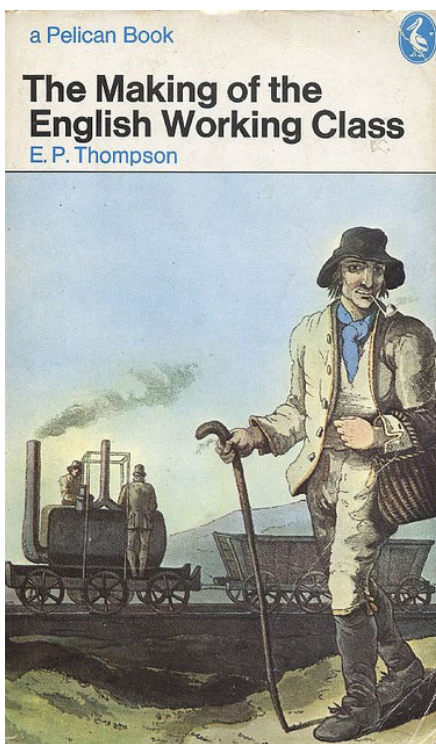
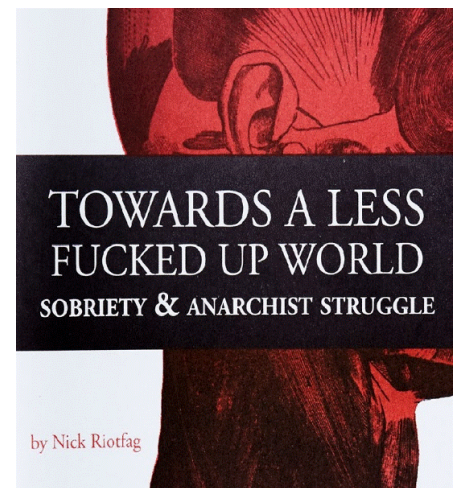
John Player **Adult education and the temperance movement : Looking back**

**It is heroin & Buckfast pity
not tear gas nor baton charge
that stops you from taking the city**

(Ghetto Defendant by Jones, Strummer [& Player])

That's The Clash, in their song *Ghetto Defendant*, strongly suggesting that we take heed the role of heroin and other drugs in ensuring that movements of social change don't get derailed and in many ways incorporated. Their argument is a forerunner to the early-1980s to 2000s hardcore punk straight-edge abstinence approach to a less fucked-up society. The essential message of this straight edge abstinence anarchism was that if we want to make social revolution we've to get over any dependence on drugs and alcohol. Nick Riotfag (2019) asserts in his zine *Towards a Less Fucked Up World: Sobriety and Anarchist Struggle* that this abstinence approach is in many ways derivative of the strong tendencies towards sobriety initiated by the Black Panther Party after their intense conflicts with internal imperialism in the USA in the 1960s and '70s. "Capitalism plus dope equals genocide" was the premise of the Black Panther Party after these bitter and disabling experiences. They asserted that it's in the interests of the capitalist class that we're doped out our heads!

My name is John Player, like the cigarettes. Some of the younger folk won't have heard of these dreadful cigarettes. My grandfather died of lung cancer, he is buried in a grave in Glasgow and his gravestone looks like the John Player Special packet – the lettering is in gold. He died of lung cancer at 55, which was the age that so many men died in Glasgow and the West Coast of Scotland. I never met him so this is personal, this is personal stuff this. The tobacco companies knew they were using the most addictive substance known to humankind to create one of the most successful capitalist commodities, the cigarette. The Tobacco Companies were also well aware since the 1960s of the causality between smoking and early deaths due to lung cancer and managed to suppress such knowledge for decades. It wasn't by accident! The use of Crack, Smack, and Frosty Jack as effective forms of population management are not by accident either!



This notion of structural control and population management are curricula issues for an adult education recovery programme called *The Share: Learning for Democracy* based in Edinburgh, set up and supported by the now closed Serenity Cafe. Those in recovery from drugs and alcohol engage in critical adult education, looking at the structural issues perhaps not dealt with in the 12-step programme, looking at the hows and whys of the ways social structures work and in whose interests is it that the relationship between those from occupational social class 5 are dying disproportionately from DRDs (Drug Related Deaths). The Share; Learning for Democracy initiative is now supported by ERA (Edinburgh Recovery Activities).

And that's the question – in whose interests, as Nick Riotfag (2019) says, is it that we're all – *fucked*? Excuse the language but let's get real and look at what is at stake?

So, it's not by accident that after 1919, with the proclamation of a Soviet, there was a move from Scottish Labour Colleges to the WEA, and reformism really. It's not by accident – the nature of internal British Imperialism is not fully understood. E.P. Thomson in *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), however, recognised the differences in Scottish and English working class formation and

history. Thomson argues that,

“The Scottish record, in particular, is quite as dramatic, and as tormented, as our own. The Scottish Jacobin agitation was more intense and more heroic. But the Scottish story is significantly different. Calvinism was not the same thing as Methodism, although it is difficult to say which, in the early 19th century, was worse. We had no peasantry in England comparable to the Highland migrants. And the popular culture was very different. It is possible, at least until the 1820s, to regard the English and Scottish experiences as distinct, since trade union and political links were impermanent and immature” (p.13).

E.P. Thompson, to reiterate, called his book *The Making of the English Working Class* – a heroic, historic text – because the history of the Scottish working class is different, it’s different, it’s a different class history.

By way of historical rupture, there was a mass insurrection in Scotland in 1820 with the leaders being hung, people being deported and jailed, after their then radical and revolutionary demand for universal suffrage, for parliamentary reform, for home rule. The rational fear of similar reprisals from the British State acted as a catalyst for Chartism’s move towards reformism rather than the revolutionary and indeed the insurrectionary road. Chartism, which maintained essentially the same demands of the Scottish insurrection of 1820, flourished in the 19th century and it flourished as part of and alongside the temperance movement. The temperance movement was very much allied with the workers’ movement because back in the 19th century workers could be paid in beer. Moreover, as Nicholls (2009) points out,

“Like the radical teetotallers of the 1830s and 1840s, socialist temperance campaigners identified the drinks trade as an industry which conspired to disenfranchise and exploit working people. Unlike their teetotal forebears, however, they absolutely rejected the simplistic ‘absurdity’ that drink was the sole cause of poverty. The drink problem was part of a wider problem of exploitation, lack of opportunity and cultural denigration. Nevertheless, it was a crucial part of the system of social and economic power that acted against the interest of the workers” (p.151).

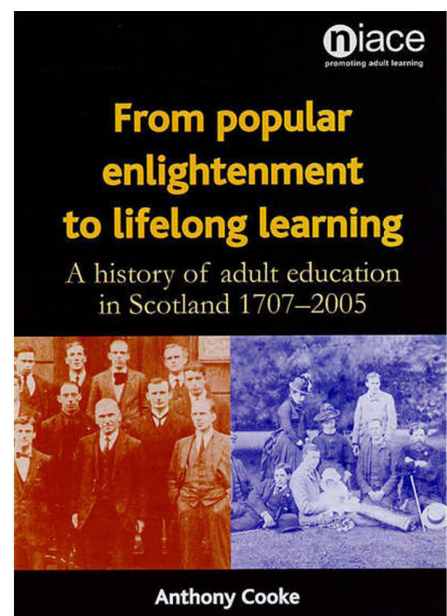
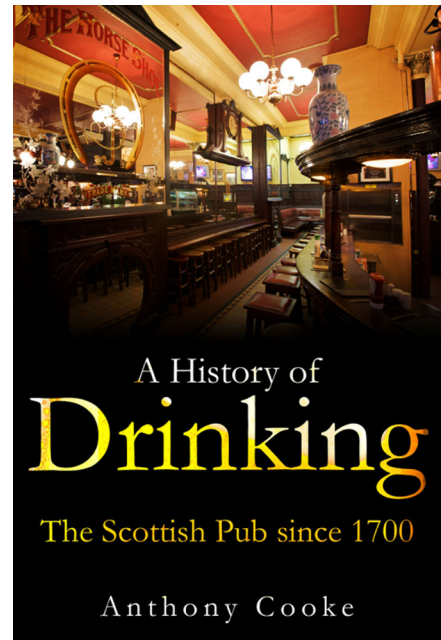
Chartism really captured the radical imagination of Scotland when 100,000 people went to hear the Chartist leaders in the 1830s on Glasgow Green. And the Chartists really initiated this idea – it’s almost a Calvinistic Presbyterian self-elect thing about temperance – that you can’t create social revolution – you can’t create social change – if you’re pished out of your head!

The proposition here is quite straightforward.

This idea about the self-elect, this idea about the autodidact, this idea about adult education being rooted in sobriety because of the horror and the day-to-day indignation people were faced with. The way the working class dealt with their suffering, and were encouraged to, the way they dealt with their alienation, the way they dealt with their exploitation, was through the bevvy, really, through whisky in the main, the alcoholic beverage for the Scottish working class right up until 1919.

Anthony Cooke’s (2015) book *A History of Drinking: The Scottish Pub Since 1700* is a deeply political text recognising the social control and population management ability of alcohol in Scotland. Cooke (2006) also wrote the only detailed primer on the history of adult education in Scotland, *From Popular Enlightenment to Lifelong Learning: A History of Adult Education in Scotland 1707-2005*. This is recommended especially in relation to population management and resistance in Scotland because it goes in detail into the temperance movement, and explores it further in his *History of Drinking...*

So how do you create social revolution?



The movement for progressive, social change in Scotland was, in part, initiated by the demands for working class representation by Keir Hardie. Hardie first stood for parliament in 1888 as an independent, and later that year helped form the Scottish Labour Party. Hardie won the English seat of West Ham South as an independent candidate in 1892, and helped to form the Independent Labour Party (ILP) the following year. He really represented the Independent Labour Party – was for home rule for Scotland, was a founder of the Labour Party, was for temperance reforms and somebody who was personally committed to abstinence. So the temperance movement had two ambitions:

Moral abstinence – “I’m going to persuade you to stop bevvying so much – I’m going to persuade you to become abstinent”

Outlawing drink – “..I’m going to initiate prohibition”

The speaker following me, discussing Adult Education and Recovery, Joyce, will discuss and address the failures of prohibition.

James Maxton, one of the most radical socialist ILP leaders, moved bills for prohibition in the House of Commons in the early 20th century. The temperance movement did succeed in stopping drinking on a Sunday in Scotland, so the prohibitionists had some success, it wasn’t a failed social movement. It was, however, very identified with moral judgement, it was very identified with Presbyterianism, almost a Calvinistic approach with a radical socialist edge. Keir Hardie, like James Maxton, was anti-monarchist and anti-ruling class in Scotland, and he and Maxton were advocates of temperance reform.

“it’s not tear gas nor baton charge that stops us taking the city – it’s Buckfast and heroin pity”

In 1919, in George Square, they kept Scottish tanks in Pollokshields in case there was a federation/revolutionary alliance between the workers and the soldiers as in the newly formed Soviet Union. It was put down by English tanks and the subjugation of the Scottish working-class longer term with alcohol. John Maclean, the revolutionary leader of the 1919 period or proletarian moment and founder of the Scottish Workers Republican Party (SWRP) was teetotal and entirely abstinent from alcohol. Maclean came from the Kirk in Glasgow and was educated through the church. Maclean matured into secular Dialectical Materialist philosophy and Marxian analysis of economics. When Maclean lectured on these topics he packed out Govan Town Hall. It has been suggested that there were approaching a thousand people at some of his lectures. Maclean’s adult education style, however, was very didactic probably derivative of his church education and background. The dialogical approach rooted in the work of Paulo Freire did not come to Scotland until the 1970s.

Cooke (2015) is helpful when he points out that the Independent Labour Party in Scotland and the SWRP were militantly opposed to the War. While the licensing bodies and the breweries totally supported the First World War: they promoted their staff to go and fight in the First World War, there was free drink for anybody in the war and they whipped up what is similar to the continuity of right wing populism, a deep populist antagonism towards the Independent Labour Party portraying them as the biggest tea drinkers in Scotland. ‘They loved drinking tea’ was the discourse the breweries loved to project about the ILP.

The breweries, as a hegemonic state apparatus, ensured that per head of population more Scots died in the First World War than any other nation. So, I am essentially suggesting that the trauma of the Somme, where a million people were killed with the British State unwilling to say how many Scots were killed there, that the body keeps the score. The British State constructed an intoxicated identity for young Scottish men, gave them a kilt and some bagpipes and some whisky and they were the first over the top, and the first to die in their sad droves. The breweries and the licensing board were very allied to a reactionary notion of British Imperialism, notion of the British state, capitalism, and British patriotism, while the ILP and the Scottish Workers Republican Party were against it.

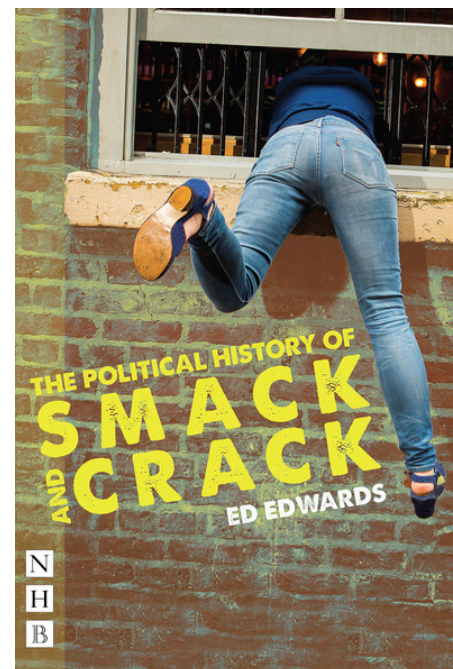
As already stated, the Scottish section of the ILP had a strong temperance cast to its politics. As late as 1926, it was passing motions for “the total prohibition of the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors”. But the ILP wasn’t just a Christian socialist ‘heaven on earth’ sort of organisation, it had a radical wing that sent volunteers to fight Franco and were allied with the POUM, the Partido Obrero de Unificacion Marxista. In June 1937, Andrés Nin and most of the POUM leadership were ‘arrested’ by Stalinist agents and Nin was executed shortly afterwards. It is asserted that Nin was tortured to death. The ILP in Scotland, thus, had a well developed anti-Stalinist analytical theoretical lens as well as a commitment to temperance. These links to the POUM and the CNT, the anarcho-syndicalist revolutionary organisations fighting Franco, are part of this

legacy of ILP in Scotland that is subjugated along with the events of 1919 in George Square. This history is subjugated and, I would argue it's not by accident.

John Maclean's comrade and revolutionary hero, Harry McShane, wasn't teetotal but managed to escape jail after the revolutionary events of 1919. Harry McShane, like Maclean and Maxton, was deeply theoretical and linked up with Raya Dunayevskaya and they developed a form of autonomous Marxism and Marxist Humanism closely working with the Trinidadian intellectual C.L.R. James. This autonomous Marxist tradition of ideas and politics mirrored in some ways the work of the Scottish ILP and the POUM in Spain and Catalonia.

I would suggest that Ed Edwards in his insightful and disturbing play *The Political History of Smack and Crack* is drawing parallels between the role of the British State and the FBI/CIA in the USA. Edwards suggests that in areas of the UK after the riots in 1981, or resistances and rebellions in Brixton, Toxteth, Moss Side, Handsworth, Chapeltown, there's a flooding of crack and smack on the streets and the embryonic political movements are dissipated. I dislike conspiracy theories, however, Edwards is adamant we access McCoy's (2003) *The Politics of Heroin, CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade* to remind ourselves of the role of J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI and the manner in which they coercively helped to destroy the rise of the Black Panthers at the end of the '60s and amidst the Vietnam War, that heroin floods the streets in which they were organised. Heroin was cheaper than marijuana and helped suppress the organisational ability of the Black Panther Party, the most influential black movement organisation of the late 1960s with the strongest link between the domestic Black Liberation Struggle and global opponents of American imperialism. Or, as Harris (2015) points out in his article *The Most Important Legacy of the Black Panthers* discussing Stanley Nelson Jr.'s influential film *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of The Revolution* (2015), it "places the blame for the group's demise almost solely on the intransigence of the F.B.I., who allegedly colluded with the mafia and local law enforcement to flood the black community with drugs, necessitating the drug violence and addiction"! Edwards and McCoy maintain that drugs as a population management tool did not arrive by accident and have been utilised by nation-states such as the US and UK in times of intense crisis.

These are sinister propositions, that the ravaging of society with drugs and drug-related deaths are deeply political. If it's not by accident, the question is why us? Why do we, the Scots, have the highest drug deaths in Western Europe, if not the world? That is where my friend and colleague, Joyce, will come in and take up the here and now.



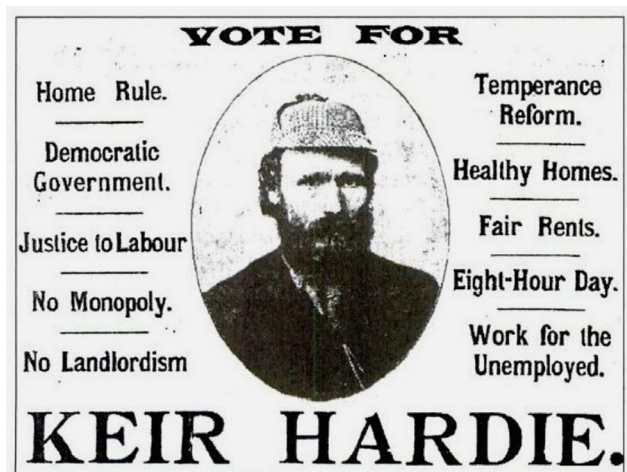
Joyce Nicholson **Adult Education and the recovery movement: Looking forward**

How do you follow that? I hope I manage to make some links between all of these things. I've been involved in the addiction field for about thirty years. I obviously was a young woman when I started, working mainly with women and children, drug-using women and homeless people mainly who were using alcohol at that point. And of course, this is the crossover now, is that we don't have big separate populations, we have people using lots of substances all together at the same time. But yes, how do you follow John, I'm not sure. I'm going to offer you some invitations I think, that is what I'm going to do. And then at the end we've got a question and we really want to hear from some people about how we take where we're at now in terms of recovery and also the real, massive crisis that we have about drugs particularly in this city but specifically in Scotland, and what we do with that and what the role of adult education is within that, and adult learning. I'll say a wee bit but I hope it's a hopeful ending of the day. This is about pedagogies of hope and recovery, but it's also about not leaving folk behind. So that's what I'm inviting.

John has talked a lot about this, the background. I just love that picture, "Lips that touch liquor shall not touch ours".

What an incredible bunch of women, aren't they? Where did they get them from? So, this idea of temperance and I suppose what this links to in some ways are these paradigm shifts that we've made over the last 100/150 years around alcohol, and John has outlined that. Alcohol was itself seen as the demon, wasn't it? It was the substance itself; the demonisation came from the substance and it allowed people to make this progress into complete destruction. Alcohol, the drink steals children's food, all these memes and quotes about. John also spoke a wee bit about the attempts to criminalise alcohol, and we succeeded in criminalising drugs but we didn't quite get there with alcohol. And in America clearly people did, well the American government did, at the same time as cash crop growing marijuana were actually prohibiting the sale of alcohol. And you can see mass popular uprising against that. "We demand beer". Imagine if that had been done maybe there would have been popular uprising, I don't know. John has covered some of this so I won't spend too long because I want to get to where we're at now. I think the Independent Labour Party particularly saw the drink as social waste; it was a social waste. And it was a waste of the economic, physical, mental, and moral elements of all of our lives and it was a deeply political issue.

The first invitation really comes from Keir Hardie, he says, "The man, who can take a glass or let it alone is under moral obligation for the sake of the weaker brother who cannot do so, to let it alone". So, here's the invitation that Keir Hardie is making – let's all not take drink – or in fact take any substances. Now I want you to sit with that invitation because some of you may already be there, because there will be many people here, many of us in recovery who will not be taking drink or drugs and what Keir Hardie's saying is in response to his stepfather's own drinking – so he's an affected family member – we should all not imbibe. So those heading to The Doublet (pub) after, I'm just offering you that invitation!



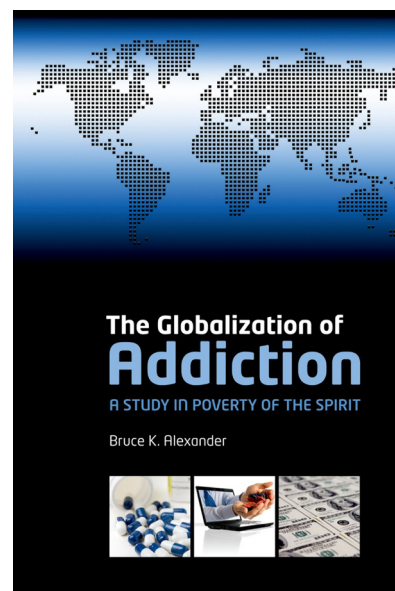
What probably happened is that we moved from seeing the drink as the problem to almost individualising people as the problem, and with criminalised drug use we see individuals as the problem in this neoliberal discourse. I think what has happened is a very powerful revolution, since 2008 really, since our drugs strategy changed, a revolution of recovery. And we have some people here, we've got Anne-Marie from the Recovery Consortium as well, I could spend 15 hours telling you what the recovery movement is doing. It's vast, it's huge, it's epic, it's amazing. There are communities, there are colleges, there are cafes, there are hubs. There's a new community being established down in Ayrshire about people living together in community. I just can't begin to tell you the amount of adult education, the amount of learning that is happening that we probably need to capture much more robustly. What's going on, what are people doing, we need to capture that really, really strongly. We've created experts by experience and we're literally building communities. White and Cloud's work¹⁴ describes the building of capital – social, physical, human and cultural in recovery journeys and the key role of adult education in a process of identity transformation. So, an invitation here to you, see the critical role that community education plays in this space, please check out RECOVEU¹⁵ for more detail around this.

But this is not the whole picture. There is another and very urgent story unfolding over the last few years in Scotland, and that we all confront and address. So, whilst this amazing movement has been developing, we are in crisis. As many of you will know, we are in a public health emergency – a crisis situation. We have seen a very significant increase in drug related deaths in Scotland over the last few years. We have the highest drug related deaths per head of population in Europe, if not in the world. We also currently have outbreaks of HIV infection in Glasgow and Edinburgh. This is a deeply political issue, linked to poverty and deprivation. People are 17 times more likely to experience drug dependency in deprived communities. This then is an issue for radical education and community development work more generally. What can your role be?

In Scotland, we are currently debating and developing responses including harm reduction approaches such as drug consumption rooms, which have so far not been allowed to open, as a reserved issue. Westminster is blocking these moves, but there are new projects for homeless people to receive Heroin Assisted Treatment, which has just started in this city, decriminalising drug use and moves to reduce stigma. We all can have a role to play in that, so another invitation – what can you do in your roles to reduce stigma, reduce marginalisation of people who use drugs? How can you challenge the outsider view – the marginal view of people that are using?

To go back slightly, to the ideas around social capital, there has been evidence around strong links to social capital and rates of overdose by Zoorob and Salemi¹⁶ and clear links to the role of low socioeconomic status in overdose recently by Heyman¹⁷. So how can community education address these issues? I am suggesting that this is beyond the reach of the recovery community and drug services to do this – that we all have a role in naming and acting to address these issues. I want now to turn to Bruce Alexander's work to highlight some ways forward.

So, Bruce Alexander is a psychologist and known for his 'rat park' experiments, which I do not have time to go into here. Here is his book *The Globalisation of Addiction: Poverty of the Spirit*. So, in this work he suggests that we are all dislocated due to globalised hypercapitalism. The free market as it globalises creates psychosocial dislocation. Because of this we are all in pain and engaged in what he describes as mass addictions. Drug and alcohol are a small part of these mass addictions

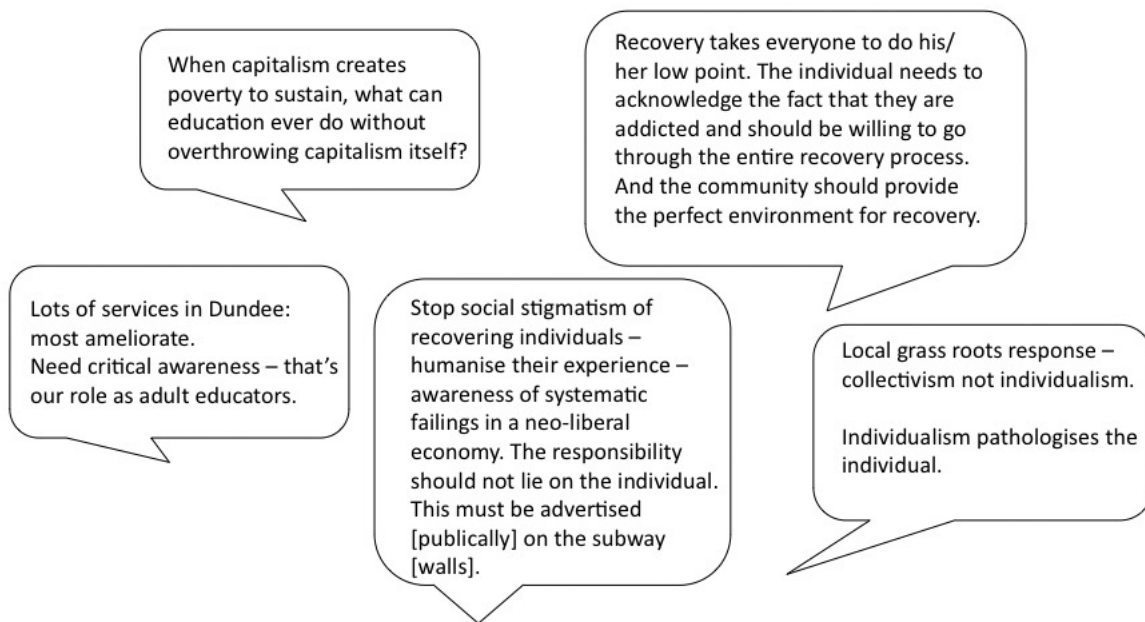


14. White, W. & Cloud, W. (2008). 'Recovery capital: A primer for addictions professionals', *Counselor* 9(5) pp.22-27: <http://www.williamwhitepapers.com/pr/2008RecoveryCapitalPrimer.pdf>
15. RECOVEU - A participative approach to curriculum development for adults in addiction recovery across the European Union: <https://recoveu.org>
16. Zoorob, M. and Salemi, J. (2017) 'Bowling alone, dying together: The role of social capital in mitigating the drug overdose epidemic in the United States', *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* 173 pp.1-9: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0376871617300297>
17. Heyman, G., McVicar, N. and Brownell, H. (2019) 'Evidence that social-economic factors play an important role in drug overdose deaths', *International Journal of Drug Policy* 74 pp.274-284: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S095539591930204X>

which also include, for example, consumerism. Mass addictions are the ways we adapt to this dislocation. In this view then, drug problems and addiction are social problems, political problems. What is in some ways radical about this approach is that people are then not pathologised, individualised. Drug and alcohol users are using for functional reasons, to adapt to the pain of psychosocial dislocation. Neither is there a binary around who has problems or not, or who is in recovery, or not. He argues that the best way out of addiction is to find a place in a real community. The key is connection, which many of you will have heard in a range of approaches to this issue. Really critically, everyone is able to offer help as we all exist in a dislocated world, and education has a critical role in helping political and social change, as well as supporting change for individuals. Harm reduction is offering a hand towards people still using and at risk of a range of life threatening and life limiting harms.

So, this is my final invitation to you all in community education and community development work. I want to invite you to embrace those in your community who are using and drinking and those in recovery and find ways in which we can all act together. I will leave you with this question and plea for *conscientização*, for pedagogies of hope. What are the opportunities for radical adult education to tackle the inequalities inherent in recovery, drug dependence, and drug related deaths and what is your role?

Responses from the audience to the questions posed were:



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STATE SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN FUNDING
BUT SHOULD STAY AWAY FROM DICTATING
DISCOURSE (WHAT IS TAUGHT) IN ORDER
TO MAINTAIN FAIR NON-POLITICIZED EDU.
LEAVE PEDAGOGY TO THE EXPERTS
FROM MIXED POLITICAL LEANINGS

STATE PROVIDES ADULT
EDUCATION TO ACHIEVE
IT'S OWN AGENDA.

NON-STATE
CHALLENGES
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Is the perception of literacy
as deficit related to
literacy difficulty, rather
than non-conforming with
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See said "Literacy as liberator,
literacy as weapon"

— Online benefit claims a prime
example. why is there no
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One system DOES NOT fit all.
yet sanctions abound if online system
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